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State of the State Response by House Democratic Leader Janet Cruz

Tallahassee, FL – Video of House Democratic Leader Janet Cruz's State of the State response can be viewed on [The Florida Channel](#).

The full text of Leader Cruz's remarks can be viewed below.

- Good morning.
- I'm House Democratic Leader Janet Cruz.
- This year marks the 20th anniversary of Republicans taking control of state government in Tallahassee.
- For two decades now, the top priority in Tallahassee has been funding huge giveaways of your tax dollars to the big special interests.
- Whether it's through tax breaks that only benefit the privileged few and the largest corporations or the relentless, ideological drive to privatize core functions of your state government, the Republican solution to every issue facing our state has been to find more ways to line the pockets of the wealthy and the well-connected at your expense.
- If you take one thing away from my remarks today I want it to be this:
- **Florida's problems do not lie in our revenues or our spending.**
- **Florida's problems lie in the misplaced priorities of 20 years of Republican leadership.**
- Today, you heard more of the same failed solutions from Governor Scott.
- His big plans this year include more corporate welfare that won't benefit Florida's small businesses, to give more tax dollars to for-profit charter school corporations at the expense of our public schools, cuts to safety-net hospitals that serve those most in need of healthcare, and destructive environmental policies that value growth and development over the preservation of our state's extraordinary natural treasures.
- Now, the Governor will say that his agenda is all about jobs and his proposals will help to create more opportunities for Floridians to get to work.
- But let's talk about the kind of jobs the Governor is focused on creating because that's the dirty little secret he wants to keep from you.

- The Governor, and Republican leadership in this state, want to create low-paying jobs that benefit the largest corporations because lower wages means higher profits for those at the top of the economic ladder.
- There's no disputing the facts: Florida continues to lag behind the nation in median income for our families.
- For too many, a savings account is just a fantasy when you're struggling to pay the rent and a trip to the doctor seems like a luxury you can't afford.
- **That must change.**
- Unlike the Governor, who has rewarded those who have given to his campaigns regardless of their merit, I happen to agree with Speaker Richard Corcoran that government ought not to be in the business of picking winners and losers when it comes to economic development.
- Government helps to create jobs in the sense of providing the atmosphere a business owner needs to thrive.
- For the Governor and the Speaker, this is all nothing more than a rhetorical battle over which failed policies will play best to their base in a primary election.
- But while two men with their eyes lifted to higher office have lost sight of what's best for our state, **House Democrats are focused solely on improving the lives of every day Floridians.**
- Because for House Democrats, **your priorities are our priorities.**
- The way to create good-paying jobs for workers begins with improving our public education system.
- Rather than the Republican idea of diverting hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars into private, for-profit charter school corporations, House Democrats believe we should instead be focused on ensuring that every neighborhood has a public school it can be proud of.
- Every child in Florida deserves the right to have all the tools they need to achieve their greatest potential.
- To that point, every teacher in Florida should know that they are valued and respected for the incredible job that they do in an incredibly challenging profession.
- It's time we stop with silly incentive programs like the Best and Brightest program and we stop relying on a flawed performance measurement system and we do the right thing: **give our teachers a raise!**
- It is embarrassing that Florida pays our teachers ten thousand dollars a year less than the national average.
- If we are going to recruit and retain the most talented people to educate our children, it starts with paying them a wage they can live on without working a second job.
- When it comes to the future, an educated workforce that is prepared for the jobs of tomorrow is key to attracting good-paying jobs to Florida.

- It's also outrageous that Republicans want to cut hundreds of millions from our safety net hospitals after they refused to expand Medicaid to help over 800,000 working Floridians.
- A sick workforce means millions of dollars in lost economic opportunity for businesses and workers.
- It's commonsense that a healthy worker is a more productive worker and that can only be achieved by access to quality, affordable healthcare that allows preventative care.
- Unlike the Governor, I actually believe that it is imperative that we confront man-made climate change and sea level rise that is imperiling our state.
- We cannot create jobs if our state is literally underwater.
- You would think the "jobs" Governor would see this as a priority, but instead he banned the use of the words climate change!
- Along those same lines, we can't have thriving businesses without access to clean drinking water.
- I'm proud to be a cosponsor this year of a bill that's been a major Democratic priority for years: to ban fracking in Florida.
- Protecting our drinking water and natural resources is key to the economic future of millions of working Floridians and should be at the top of the list of proposals we are considering.
- House Democrats also believe that instead of giving away more taxpayer dollars to large corporations, we should be giving real tax relief to working Floridians.
- That's why we've proposed tax breaks that would put more money back into the pockets of mothers with toddlers and our veterans.
- When Floridians have more money to spend, it becomes an investment in local small businesses when that money is put back into our economy.
- This helps to create more good-paying jobs.
- So now I've told you about the priorities of Republicans and Democrats in Florida and I encourage you to decide: **who really shares your priorities?**
- I want to hear from you directly.
- Let House Democrats know what your top priorities are for Florida using the hashtag Priority Blue on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.
- We'll be monitoring the hashtag throughout the year and speaking directly to the issues and concerns of every day Floridians.
- I'm excited to hear from you!
- Thank you for your time today and may God bless Florida.

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